
IMPROVED FORMULAS FOR DETERMINING COURT STAFFING NEEDS

The Judiciary initiated a major two-year study in June 1998 to update formulas for determining staffing requirements in the courts. The Judiciary will use the new formulas to allocate court staff resources beginning in fiscal year 2001 and to estimate personnel requirements beginning with the fiscal year 2002 budget request.

These staffing formulas serve as the basis for determining personnel needs in appellate, district, and bankruptcy clerks' offices and probation and pretrial services offices, which in fiscal year 1999 include about 20,000 people. The Judiciary develops the formulas through a detailed work measurement process. The current formulas were developed several years ago and do not account for changes in recent years that may have impacted the need for staffing, such as more efficient work processes or additional workload demands imposed by new legislation.

The first stage of this effort involves a work measurement study in each court unit type. It begins with creating a complete description of work being performed. A team of work measurement analysts and court subject matter experts then conduct on-site interviews in 20-25 district and bankruptcy courts and probation and pretrial services offices and the 12 regional appellate courts. After collecting the data, the Judiciary will develop formulas to reflect current work requirements and processes.

The second stage of this effort will provide a means for regularly updating the formulas to account for future changes in the system that increase or decrease staffing needs. After initial formula development, study teams will visit approximately 10 additional court units each year and conduct measurements similar to those involved in the base study. At the end of a three-year measurement period and after examining data from 30 additional court units, the Judiciary will revise the formulas to maintain an accurate estimate of staffing requirements. The process will be repeated at three-year intervals.

The Judiciary will finish the measurement studies in the sample courts in November 1999. The analysis phase will follow, and new formulas will be finalized in June 2000, in time for use in fiscal year 2001 resource allocation and fiscal year 2002 budget formulation.

This effort will help ensure the Judiciary employs the optimal number of staff needed to meet work requirements.